

THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE
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FOR RELEASE ON RECEIPT

Ten new galleries for the display of 19th century American and European art open December 17, 1974 at the Cleveland Museum of Art, culminating a year-long reinstallation program which has seen the entire second floor of the Museum's west wing completely remodeled.

Over 8000 square feet of floor space have been carefully rearranged and partitioned to create a sequence of beautifully proportioned spaces of varying scale to harmonize with the styles and schools of art dating from about 1780 to 1880.

The collections of Ancient, Islamic, and Oriental art, formerly housed in the west wing, earlier were reinstalled in new galleries elsewhere in the Museum.

In the new gallery arrangement, all spaces are interconnected and follow the flow of the development of 19th century art, Museum Director Sherman E. Lee says. "Available wall footage has been doubled, allowing the display of numerous paintings and sculptures previously held in storage and only occasionally exhibited.

"Lighting has been varied," Dr. Lee continues, "so that where possible natural light is available for paintings and sculptures, while the more delicate media of water color and pastel are installed in artificially lit galleries of an intimate scale."

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new west wing galleries

Wall colors compatible with the period and style of the works have been utilized throughout. For example, a deep blue has been used in the gallery housing the elegant Neo-Classical works, while the more naturalistic Barbizon paintings are displayed on a rich earthtone brown.

William E. Ward, the Museum's designer, created the design for the galleries, and the installation.

One part of the rearrangement plan represents a relatively new departure in Museum installation -- the integration of American 19th century art with European art of the same period. Here, American portraiture of the late 18th century and English portrait art of the same time -- so closely related in style -- are housed in adjoining galleries, while American landscape painting of the Hudson River school has been installed in a gallery immediately adjacent to the Barbizon landscape painting of France.

The concept of integrating works approximate in time, stylistic influence, or iconographical relationship extends further to encompass sculpture, prints and drawings, and the decorative arts.

Now, Antonio Canova's superb Neo-Classical marble sculpture, Terpsichore, is juxtaposed with Jacques Louis David's monumental painting of the same period, Cupid and Psyche; a beautiful silver teapot by Boston silversmith Nathaniel Hurd is displayed with John Singleton Copley's portrait of Hurd; drawings in the Romantic style by Théodore Géricault and Eugène Delacroix are shown with the Romantic paintings of J.M.W. Turner, John Constable, Eugène Isabey.

The remodeling of the west wing has been made possible by a \$50,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, matched three-to-one with \$150,000 contributed by friends of the Museum. It completes the fourth phase of a five-phase program for the rearrangement and reinstallation of

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new west wing galleries

the Museum's collections, which when concluded, Director Sherman Lee says, "will result in a presentation of the collections unique among American art museums, and one we feel will substantially enhance visitors' understanding and enjoyment of the works.

"The rationale for the rearrangement is simple, yet not new," Dr. Lee states. "Its first premise is that works of art were created within the matrix of history, and that while they may occasionally be removed from that matrix for particular purposes, they should inevitably be seen again and again within their historical and cultural context if their meaning is to be fully understood and enjoyed."

This concept of art museum collection arrangement was used within architectural limitations early in the 20th century at the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin, and to a lesser extent in succeeding decades at the Rhode Island School of Design Museum in Providence, and at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Most usually, however, the practice is to place the collections by the traditional departmental divisions, or divisions by materials, such as wood, metal, ceramics.

The rearrangement of the Cleveland collections is designed to take the gallery visitor through the paths of Western, Oriental, and Pre-Columbian American art in their historical contexts. The various media are integrated, heightening the historical orientation of the gallery arrangements.

To date, four phases of this rearrangement program have been completed. Phase I, the installation of the Oriental and Modern (post 1873) collections, was finished in 1970. Phase II, the installation of an 18th century French room from Rouen and its adjacent galleries, was finished in early 1973.

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new west wing galleries

Phase III, the relocation and rearrangement of the collections of Ancient, Islamic, and Early Christian and Byzantine art, was completed in late 1973.

Two additional new galleries, those devoted to African and Oceanic art, were completed in the fall of 1974 as part of the present Phase IV development.

The final segment of the rearrangement plan is scheduled to begin in 1975. It will include the renovation and reinstallation of the Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque and Rococo galleries in the Museum's original 1916 building.

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For additional information or photographs, please contact Frances Stamper, Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106; (216) 421-7340.

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The African Tribal Art Collection

The Cleveland Museum of Art was one of the first general art museums to collect African tribal art. The first African pieces were given by J. H. Wade in 1915, a year before the Museum's public opening. In 1929 and 1931, the collection was augmented by a group of objects donated by the Gilpin Players and African Art Sponsors of Karamu House.

The collection now contains representative objects from all the important sculpture-producing tribes of black Africa. Many of these objects are gifts of Cleveland donors, particularly Katherine C. White (now of California), Mr. and Mrs. Ralph M. Coe, Mr. and Mrs. Alvin N. Haas, and Dr. and Mrs. Thomas Munro. Dr. Munro, Curator of Art Education at the Cleveland Museum of Art from 1935 to 1967, was one of the first museum curators in this country to recognize the significance of African tribal art and to encourage its study.

African art is essentially religious art. Masks and figures, which form the main body of African art, are created for use in rituals or ceremonies where the tribe seeks to influence the spiritual forces which it believes govern the natural world.

Masks, which are the most common and varied African sculptures, are worn at fertility and harvest ceremonies, funerals, initiations of the young into secret societies, when justice is dispensed, or healing rites performed. Designed to inspire awe in the beholder, masks are often grotesque in appearance.

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Ancestor figures are intended to provide resting places for the indestructible and potentially dangerous spirits of dead members of the tribe. In making these figures, the artist often exaggerates what he feels are important parts of the body, particularly the head, which is believed to house the life force.

The objects in the Museum's African gallery are arranged in five groups: masks, figures, decorative arts, body arts, and royal arts and regalia. Accompanying each object is a description of its purpose, and in many cases, a photograph illustrating the object in actual use.

The majority of these pieces are carved from wood, a material readily available in central Africa but also highly perishable. The earliest wood carvings in the Museum's collection date from the last part of the 19th century.

Among the African tribes noted for their wood carving and well represented by pieces in this collection are the Baulé, an Ivory Coast tribe whose sensitive carvings were among the first to be admired and collected by Europeans, and the Yoruba, a Nigerian tribe who have produced more sculpture than any other African tribe. Representative of the Congo are the Bakuba, famous for their decorative arts, and the Bayaka, creators of extraordinarily diverse masks.

The tradition of ivory carving is represented in this collection by several objects, including a magnificently carved elephant tusk made in Benin City, West Africa, during the late 19th century.

Benin City, in Nigeria, was once the capital of the powerful Benin kingdom, which reached the peak of its power and influence in the 16th century and then declined. The Benin artisans were noted for their bronze castings as well as their ivories. On exhibit is a Benin bronze head of an Oba or king, created in the 17th century to be placed on an ancestral altar.

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3-african tribal art collection

In addition to these larger objects, the African collection contains intricately designed gold ornaments made by the Ashanti and Baulé tribes, using the lost wax process. There are also fine examples of decorative arts: domestic utensils, tobacco pipes, musical instruments, ceremonial knives and axes, and raffia textiles.

Curator of the Museum's African and Oceanic collections is William D. Wixom.

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Assistant curator of art history and education Jay Gates will discuss African sculpture on the Museum's televised program, "Galleries", to be seen on WVIZ (Channel 25) on December 31, 1974, at 9:30 p.m.

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The Oceanic Collection

Oceania embraces Australia, New Zealand, New Guinea and the hundreds of small scattered islands designated as Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia. Like the African tribesmen, the natives of Oceania engage in rituals designed to influence supernatural forces. They lavish many of their artistic skills on masks, shields, figures and other objects required for ceremonial use. They also embellish domestic utensils and other useful objects with religious motifs in the belief that objects so decorated will have greater efficiency.

The arts of Melanesia, which includes the large islands of New Guinea, New Britain, and New Ireland, are the most colorful and dramatic in Oceania. A Malanggan pole from New Ireland, in the Museum's collection, exhibits elaborate carving and decoration. These poles were carved in secret as memorials to dead clansmen, then revealed to the entire tribe at the Malanggan festival.

New Guinea produces the greatest variety of art in the entire South Pacific, and the Sepik River region is its most important art-producing area. The Sepik River is represented by several carved and painted objects and one of the most powerful sculptures in the Oceanic collection -- a Kamanggabi spirit figure with an elongated head and a body composed of crescent shapes.

Art from the Papuan Gulf area of New Guinea is distinguished for its bold use of line and color, while the wood carving of the Massim area is noted for magnificent curvilinear design motifs. A canoe prow in the collection demonstrates the highly developed technique of the Massim area artists.

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2-oceanic collection

The arts of Polynesia are more restrained than those of Melanesia.

Intricate geometric designs are used in place of color to decorate surfaces. The Polynesian artist believed that the power or usefulness of an object was proportionate to the amount of work involved in making it.

The Maori artist is considered the finest sculptor in Polynesia. Much of his skill was devoted to architectural ornament. The Oceanic collection contains a lintel from New Zealand which is an excellent example of Maori carving. Also in the collection are breast pendants of nephrite, a semi-precious stone, and the Maori's most prized possession.

Oceanic art, like African art, was created chiefly with materials that deteriorate easily in a warm climate. The pieces in the Museum's collection are less than a hundred years old, most of them acquired during the last fifty years. The indigenous arts of Oceania are now virtually extinct. Some art is still produced in New Guinea, where tribal customs have survived, but it is frequently inferior in quality and designed with the export market in mind.

The principal donors to the Museum's Oceanic collection are William M. Milliken, Dr. and Mrs. Thomas Munro, Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Klejman, Richard Inglis, and Edgar A. Hahn.

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